

Distinctions Between Primary and Secondary Psychopathy: Gender-Match as a Facilitator of Victim Empathy?

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Introduction

Psychopathy: Life-long pattern of hostile, irresponsible, and antisocial behavior.

- **Primary:** Behavior is manipulative and motivated by personal gain. Thought to have an inability to experience emotions due to deficiencies in the limbic system.
- **Secondary:** Behavior is a result of high anxiety and negativity coupled with a lack of behavioral and emotional control. Suggested to have the ability to experience guilt, though it is typically masked by antisocial behavior. Thought to be environmentally and biologically driven.

Empathy:

- **General:** Recognizing and sharing in another person's emotions.
- **Victim:** Understanding and sharing in the emotions of a crime victim.
- **Cognitive:** Mentally recognizing others' emotions.
- **Affective:** Emotional experience in response to an emotional reaction of another.
- **Explicit:** Deliberate, conscious processing of emotions; often assessed by self-report measures.
- **Implicit:** Spontaneous, involuntary processing of emotions; often assessed by physiological measures.

- Few conclusions can be made regarding the psychopathy and empathy relationship.
 - Blair et al. (2006) found negative relationship.
 - Lishner et al. (2012) found positive relationship.
 - Glaser & Lutz-Zois (2014) found no relationship.
- Differential findings may result from failure to assess implicit, affective empathy, from lack of psychopathy subtype distinctions, or from failure to distinguish general from victim empathy.
- The type of empathy a person is likely to endorse or physiologically respond to may vary as a function of psychopathy subtype, as primary and secondary types are thought to have different etiologies (Fowles & Dindo, 2006), and thus, different empathetic abilities (Ali et al., 2009).
- Further, it may be necessary to distinguish between general and victim empathy because research suggests that individuals may feel more empathy for victims that are similar to themselves than victims who are not (Davis, 1980).

Hypotheses

Objective: Assess implicit and explicit empathetic response patterns in individuals with primary and secondary psychopathic traits and how they may vary in different context created by different victim and offender gender pairings.

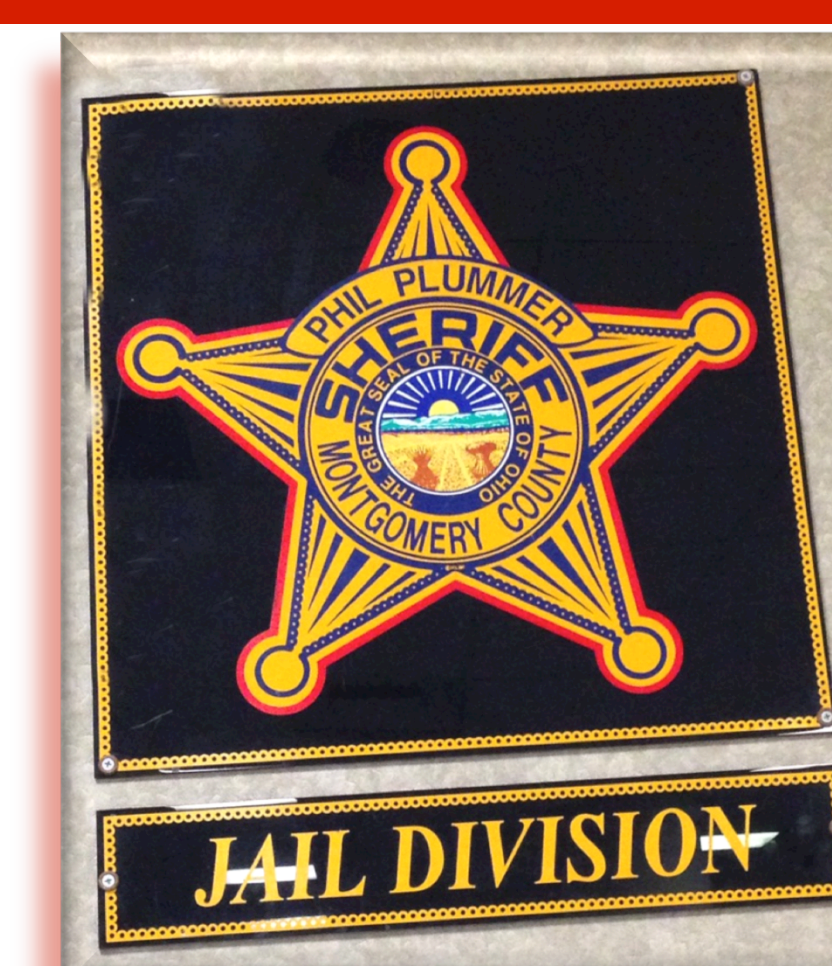
H1: Secondary psychopathy will be positively related to both implicit and explicit measures of victim empathy for gender-matched victims, but will be negatively to implicit and explicit measures of victim empathy for gender non-matched victims and for explicit measures of general empathy.

H2: Primary psychopathy will negatively related to implicit measures of affective victim empathy and positively related to explicit measures of both victim and general empathy.

Method

Participants

- 60 Female, 60 Male offenders incarcerated at Montgomery County Jail in Dayton, OH.
- Various charges, excluding sexual offenses.



Procedure and Materials

Session 1

- Individually, participants (1) listen to a recording that presents directions on how to play a game in order to obtain a baseline heart rate (HR), (2) listen to an empathy-provoking vignette of either a male or female victim who describes being physically assaulted, (3) listen to directions on how to play a different game in order to obtain a resting HR. HR is recorded continually. Participants also (4) read words out loud in order to assess their reading level.
 - Levels below 3rd grade will be excluded from analyses.

Session 2

- In groups, participants complete the following measures:
 - Victim Empathy
 - **VERA** (Young, Gudjonsson, Terry, & Bramham, 2008)
 - Primary and Secondary Psychopathy
 - **LSRP** (Levenson, Kiehl, & Fizpatrick, 1995)
 - **SRP-4** (Paulhus, Neumann, & Hare, 2014)
 - **STAI** (Spielberger, Gorsuch, & Lushene, 1970)
 - General Empathy
 - **IRI** (Davis, 1980)

Analyses

H1: Multiple regression equations with type of victim empathy as the criterion (dependent) variable.

1. Control for demographic variables that indicated significant group differences.
2. Enter main effect for secondary psychopathy and gender-match variable:
 - Mean center secondary psychopathy
 - Dummy code gender-match variable
 - Control for primary psychopathy
3. Enter an interaction term that represents the product of Step 2.

Prediction: Significant interaction between secondary psychopathy and gender-match variable.

H2: Regression equations similar to those used for H1.

1. Control for demographic variables that indicated significant group differences in victim empathy.
2. Enter main effect for primary psychopathy and gender-match.
 - Mean center primary psychopathy.
 - Dummy code gender-match.
 - Control for secondary psychopathy.
3. Enter an interaction term that represents the product of Step 2.

Prediction: Significant main effect of primary psychopathy and empathy.

References

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